

**For the Week Ending
September 23, 2016**

Upcoming Town meetings:

- **Selectboard:** Tuesday, September 27, 5:30 PM: Munson Road discontinuance pre-hearing site visit Munson Road at Bay Road intersection. Public hearing to follow at 6:45 PM during regular Selectboard meeting, below.
- **Selectboard:** Tuesday, September 27, 6:30 PM, Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, Outer Bay Conference Room, 3rd floor.
- **Development Review Board:** Wednesday, September 28, 7:00 PM, Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, Outer Bay Conference Room, 3rd floor.

Upcoming events:

- **Pink Out the Park: 5K Run/Walk** to benefit Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, Saturday, October 1, 10:00 AM at Bayside Park. Sign up at Active.com
- **Hallowe'en Party at Burnham Library:** Saturday, October 29, 2 pm. Trick or treat around the library; Hallowe'en stories, crafts, snacks, dancing, and goodies to take home. Mini costume parade around the grounds. All ages welcome. Registration required.

Notices:

- **Early/Absentee Voting:** Now available at the Town Clerk's office.
- **Final GreenPlay Presentation:** Conceptual plan for the Bayside Park and Bayside-Hazelett areas, including a community center at Bayside Park. Please join us at the Select Board Meeting September 27, 7:00 PM For more information visit: <http://colchestervt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=156>

**Town Manager's Special Edition
Dawn H. Francis, Town Manager**

**The Future of Recreation in Colchester:
Planning Today for Our Community Tomorrow**

PURPOSE

In the heart of idyllic Malletts Bay near the high school, lies Bayside Park. In days past, this park was the center of summer tourism and a gathering place for the community. Residents and visitors came together to enjoy live music and concerts by big-name bands. They roller skated, biked, jumped off docks into the crystal clear lake, chased their children and grandchildren across the grass, and relished quiet picnics.

Colchester was, and is today, an active community; one where residents and visitors want to play, explore, relax, and have fun.

But the community has grown, and residents are asking for expanded recreation facilities and a community center. They want a space that can become the heart of their town; one which will attract tourists and where neighbor can meet neighbor, where all can exercise, listen to live music, and enjoy the breathtaking views of the bay.

Colchester finds itself at a pivotal moment when it has the chance to begin making this vision for its recreation future a reality. With the potential for incoming grants from our Clean Water Initiative there is an opportunity to start creating the Bayside Park that the community desires and deserves. With grants and money from other sources there is the potential for the Town to replace roads, sidewalks, and sewer and stormwater systems, but these improvements need to be done wisely, cost effectively, and strategically.

To succeed, a Master Plan is needed; one that details the vision for Colchester's recreation future and that guides its development.

HISTORY

For years, various community groups have tried to create a vision for Colchester that includes expanded recreation facilities and a community center at local parks. Unfortunately, a lack of consensus on the vision and limited funding has stymied efforts to improve our recreation facilities.

Recognizing the growing clamor from citizens and the need to revitalize our historic commercial center, the Town committed a small amount of funding to a Master Plan project. It sought the expertise and experience of parks and recreation experts: GreenPlay, LLC, a consulting firm that specializes in community needs assessment and solutions.

For nine months the Town has collaborated with GreenPlay to accomplish two primary goals:

1. To conduct a sweeping needs assessment for a Community Health & Wellness Center and to establish a Master Plan and cost estimates for its construction and operation.
2. To determine a Master Plan for the Bayside Park area and publically owned Bayside/Hazelett land. Colchester's hallmark public park and the 14-acre

undeveloped land nearby offer the highest potential for expanding recreation opportunities.

GREENPLAY'S CONTRIBUTION

In March 2016, representatives from GreenPlay visited Colchester to begin an exhaustive assessment and fact-gathering process that lasted three days and included:

- Touring potential locations;
- Evaluating Bayside Park and the Bayside/Hazelett properties;
- Meeting with residents, Town officials, Parks & Recreation staff, and several citizen focus groups that included youth sports administrators, business owners, advisory boards, and legislative officials; and
- Hosting a public forum at the Colchester High School to present their initial findings and to gather more input from residents.

The information gathered during these meetings was used to construct a statistically-valid survey that was mailed to over 3,000 households. An online survey was also made available to collect additional feedback from residents.

Survey Results

- Responses showed residents immensely value Bayside Park, and they wish to see its amenities expanded to include an outdoor venue for community entertainment events, such as concerts or performances.
- Residents expressed a high demand for a community center that included an indoor pool, exercise equipment, and a gymnasium—these findings confirmed the near daily requests the Parks & Recreation Department receive for among other things:
 - Expanded programming that requires more gym space;
 - An indoor space to reserve for parties, meetings, and reunions;
 - More pickleball and volleyball courts;
 - Year-round swimming lessons; and
 - Expanded after-school programs with more childcare options.

Recommendations for Colchester's Recreation Future

After listening to the public's input, reviewing survey results, and conducting their own assessments of potential sites, Greenplay has concluded that:

1. Redeveloping Bayside Park has the most potential to meet the needs of the community.
2. Developing the 14-acre nearby plot, known as the Bayside/Hazelett property (which the Town acquired almost ten years ago), is an ideal complement to Bayside Park.
3. Expanded amenities should include:
 - an amphitheater to host concerts
 - pickleball and volleyball courts
 - a community center with indoor/outdoor water features
 - a dog park
 - athletic fields, Frisbee golf, green spaces, picnic areas
 - pedestrian connections and trails.

NEXT STEPS

What Colchester residents want is clear: expanded amenities at Bayside Park and new recreation facilities. Now the Town must answer a number of important questions such as: Who will be most affected by this initiative? What effect will this project have on Colchester? And, how to pay for improvements, now and in the future?

To help ease some of the sticker shock (this will be a multi-million-dollar project) GreenPlay recommends embarking on a multi-phase approach that happens over a number of years, and that leverages a number of funding sources such as:

- Partnerships;
- Grants;
- Impact fees;
- The local option tax, which brings in over one million per year;
- A capital campaign; and
- Once the facilities are operational, user fees to fund staffing and ongoing maintenance.

The immediate next step is to refine the Master Plan concepts proposed by GreenPlay that will:

- Solidify the vision for Colchester's recreation future
- Identify funding sources and create a strategy for achieving the financial goals
- Detail a multi-year, phased-in approach to development that will realize the vision
- Guide how and where the Town develops, and where important infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, and new sewer and storm-water systems are to be placed, now and in the future. By carefully planning infrastructure projects

today, the Town will avoid having to relocate them years later, thus saving time and tax payer dollars.

AN ONGOING DIALOGUE

This Master Plan will encompass years of development and we will continue the discussion with residents on how to best plan for the recreation future everyone desires. As the years go by, aspects of the plan will likely change—and that's okay.

The Master Plan is a set of ideas designed to be a starting point and to give us direction. This plan is the community's chance to bring residents together; to add vitality to Colchester; and to elevate its reputation to a "must visit" recreation destination for tourists to the Champlain Valley. This vision is not only a recreation opportunity for the Town; it's an economic one that will allow our existing business community to prosper.

This conversation and planning process is in the beginning stages and Town officials will maintain their dialogue with the public during the refinement and execution of the Master Plan. The Colchester Selectboard, staff, and volunteers are taking this initiative seriously and they will be seeking greater input and feedback from the community as the project moves forward.

If you have questions, concerns, suggestions, ideas, or want more information about this project, please contact Parks & Recreation Director, Glen Cuttitta or Town Manager, Dawn Francis. They will be happy to talk with you about this project.

Also, please keep an eye out for Selectboard agendas that will include discussions on the Master Plan and the future of recreation in Colchester. All residents are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in all meetings. This is a critical conversation, and your voice and views on the subject matter greatly.

Representatives from GreenPlay will present their current concept at the Select Board meeting on Tuesday, September 27 at 7:00 pm at the Colchester Town Office Building, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference room. Please join us and stay informed! You can follow this project on the Town's website colchestervt.gov/695/Future-Projects.

For more information about the Town Manager's Office, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/manager> or call (802) 264-5509.

Highlights from the September 13, 2016 Selectboard Meeting:

- Chief Jennifer Morrison gave a presentation on "21st Century Policing" (See <http://colchestervt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1787> for more information)

For further information or comment, please call Linda Gustainis at 802.264.5509



Colchester – What do you want to do today?

- Draft Charter changes were reviewed and the Selectboard recommended edits
- Rebecca Arnold was appointed as a member to the Colchester Planning Commission

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